

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

'End of an era' as San Bernardino prepares to hand over control of fire department

City prepares to hand over control of fire department to county

By Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Friday, June 24, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> Changes to the city's 137-year-old Fire Department are underway, a week before the county takes over.

San Bernardino County Fire officially takes responsibility for the city's fire, rescue and emergency medical services July 1, after a [series of votes](#) by officials who said the move would both save money and improve services.

Because of county schedules, the personnel swap will take place July 3, according to San Bernardino City Fire Chief Tom Hannemann.

That swap will involve about two-thirds of city staff taking jobs elsewhere in the county — including Hannemann himself, who will become an engine company captain in Fontana — and an equal number of county firefighters transferring into the city, he said.

But other switches are already happening, according to Hannemann.

"We've had quite a bit of logistical items being taken care of," Hannemann said.

Technical support changes have been ongoing for months, fire rigs have been reconfigured to communicate with the county communication center, and officials have met regularly to ensure a smooth transition, he said.

"So far, we've been having weekly conference calls and everything seems to be moving along in a very direct and productive manner," Hannemann said.

And in a visible sign of the new boss, the process of replacing city fire labels on fire trucks with county fire began Wednesday — although the new design still prominently features the city seal.

"It's the end of an era," Hannemann said. "It's a sad day to see the city of San Bernardino transition, but the positive outcome is we are going to a very capable organization that's welcoming all of us with open arms."

Officials from both fire departments, as well as city and county officials, say the new fire service will be at least as good.

But it will also bring in an additional \$7 million to \$8 million for the bankrupt city, according to city projections. That includes savings from the economies of scale offered by a larger organization and a new parcel tax, which will be \$148 per parcel in fiscal year 2016-17 and increasing by up to 3 percent each year.

That tax did not require a vote because the city was annexed into an existing fire protection district that already had the tax. Forms to protest the move were mailed to parcel owners, but the number of protests received by the April 21 deadline [fell far short](#) of the 25 percent needed to trigger an election.

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Supervisors To Vote On Ending Electronic Dance Shows At San Manuel Amphitheater

in [News](#), [Ticker](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on June 26, 2016 at 12:05 am /



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Nocturnal Wonderland — an electronic dance music festival, presented by Insomniac, September 2-4 — could be the last rave-type concert at the San Manuel Amphitheater. It's all hinges on a vote June 28 by the Board of Supervisors. (Photo by Insomniac)

By Michael P. Neufeld

San Bernardino, CA – On Tuesday, June 28, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors will decide the fate of future electronic dance shows at the San Manuel Amphitheater in Devore. The board meets at 10 a.m. in the Covington Chambers in the County Government Center in San Bernardino.



Item number 3 on the consent calendar — presented by Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford — would authorize County Counsel to issue written notice of termination to Live Nation’s contract to no longer permit any electronic dance shows at the county complex.

If approved, the effective date would be September 6 allowing at least three shows already scheduled to proceed — July 16 – Rockstar Energy Drink Presents Taste of Chaos, July 23 – Lost Highway Festival Featuring Brant Gilbert and September 2-4 – Nocturnal Wonderland.

EXERCISING CLAUSE



Basically, supervisors would be exercising a clause amending Live Nation’s contract — approved January 29, 2013 — permitting such events to last until 2 a.m.

Here is the clause that supervisors will consider invoking:

“This amendment further specifies that the show dates will be reviewed and pre-approved by the Director of Regional Parks at a minimum of 30 days prior to a show date, and includes event termination provisions based on recurrent noise violations and nuisance behavior associated with event goers.”

SUPERVISOR’S PACKET



This premium campsite — Acorn Village — during the upcoming Nocturnal Wonderland event can be rented for anywhere from \$429 to \$549 plus fees depending on 3 or 4-day stays. The event also has tent, RV and car camping sites. (Photo by Insomniac)

In the support materials included in the supervisor's packet, the financial impact of the termination is unknown.

However, the county could incur a loss of revenue from its rental agreement with Live Nation and from revenue Live Nation pays when it leases additional space at Glen Helen Regional Park for camping or other needs during such events.

The county could also potentially increase its revenue from other usage at the largest outdoor amphitheater in the United States.

The packet also includes statistics about noise complaints, arrests and two deaths that occurred during previous rave-type concerts.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the events at San Manuel Amphitheater visit [LIVE NATION](#) online.

The San Bernardino County Government Center is located at 385 North Arrowhead Avenue in San Bernardino.

(67)



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Controversy at MAC over Lake Gregory Recreation contract



Lake Gregory Recreation Company Manager Chris Freeman listens to complaints about maintenance issues at the county-owned regional park. (Photo by Rhea-Frances Tetley)

Friday, Jun 24, 2016

By Rhea-Frances Tetley The June Crest Forest Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) meeting lured a full house over Lake Gregory, its fees, cleanliness and the upcoming 20-year contract renewal with the Lake Gregory Recreation Company. Lake Gregory Improvement Committee spokesman Rick Dinon reported that dam repairs, being paid for by the county to make the dam safe, are “on schedule,” that the EIR was accepted and the next timeline of repairs will be issued in July. In July, bids will close for sediment removal and creation of silt catch basins to decrease future silt entering the lake. It was stated the silt dredgings would be placed on the former ball fields to “dewater” until needed to repair the dam. Lake Gregory Recreation Company (LGRC) Manager Chris Freeman reported opening weekend was vastly improved over last year’s. During the radio-advertised Fishing Derby, anglers came from as far as Long Beach to try for the \$2,500 prize. The LGRC hopes

to make Lake Gregory a SoCal fishing destination. While answering complaints, he said the lake is regularly stocked with fish, including 1,000 pounds the previous day. County Regional Parks is considering signing a 20-year contract with LGRC to manage the lake. Their current contract with LGRC ends in December. LGRC has first right of refusal. Many community members, coordinated by Melinda Powell, through the Facebook page "Local Scoop," attended to discuss the high fees and prices at Lake Gregory. Many did not want the LGRC contract to be renewed until more community discussions have taken place. Also, questioned were concerns over maintenance of the park, its trashcans, trails and dog park. Additionally, many of the children's zero depth waterpark features are not working. Freeman said the county has been notified to repair those items, since sediments are blocking the pipes. "Those repairs are now being fast-tracked by the county," said Freeman. Audience members were upset the baseball fields are non-operational this season, forcing local kids to play elsewhere. It costs \$35,000 a season to water the ball fields, and since they are designated for the storage of dredging silts before the season is over, it was impractical to revive them this season. Charges were leveled that the floating islands in Lake Gregory were unsanitary, resulting in kids' rashes and illnesses. Freeman reported that Environmental Health regularly declares it safe for public use and that it is low in chloroforms. "Lake Gregory is the cleanest of the mountain lakes, since gasoline engines are not permitted. It tests cleaner than Silverwood or Lake Arrowhead," Freeman added. Freeman answered the high price complaints, explaining that since Lake Gregory is a County Regional Park, the fees are set and approved by the supervisors and must be in line with the other regional parks. Dinon explained the LGRC wanted to issue discounts for locals before the LGRC contract was signed, because Crestline's economy was suffering under county management of the lake. Then County Counsel said, because Lake Gregory is funded by county tax dollars, mountain locals couldn't get a discount as it would discriminate against other county taxpayers. This issue will be re-explored. Also, MAC members heard complaints on the General Plan scoping meetings, promised advance draft proposals were not sent out early enough and advance notifications were inadequate. During the Community & Agency updates portion of the meeting, several items were brought to the attention of attendees. *Breakfast with your Supervisor* was announced. The event will be held August 5, at the San Moritz Lodge, at 8 a.m. RSVPs will be taken on Supervisor Rutherford's county website. There is a charge to cover the meal. Everyone is invited, which presents an opportunity for locals to discuss their concerns directly with the supervisor. "The defensible space inspections have begun," said Chip Pollock of Cal Fire. Several spot fires have already occurred and a defensible space around your home may be the factor that saves your structure and belongings. Citations are being issued. Captain Donny Mahoney, of the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station, reported on the recent search and rescue operation at Crab Flats near Deep Creek. Approximately 93 personnel and volunteers along with nine dogs spent 809-man-hours searching over a 40-hour period. They used 66 vehicles and six choppers, traveled 6,000 miles, at a cost to the county of over \$100,000 to find a woman who "went back to get something" and got stuck on a ledge. If she hadn't been found when she did, within twelve hours she'd have died. Several personnel were injured during the search. Mahoney suggests hiking with a group and staying hydrated. The CHP gave an update on Highway 18's center barrier construction, saying three of the eleven miles are completed. CHP warned, "Drive only 45 mph in the construction zones since tickets are being written." Penny Shubnell announced that Crestline has been designated as a Playful Community for the third year in a row, and signs are being displayed. Lewis Murray, field representative for Supervisor Janice Rutherford, announced that 1997 Rim High grad, Gilbert Flores, will join the MAC board and Beth Fitzgerald will explain fire ratings and offer fire insurance solutions for the mountain communities during the next Crest Forest MAC meeting.

Sheriff department denies serious allegations



San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Captain of the Twin Peaks Station Donny Mahoney (Photo by Gail Fry)

Friday, Jun 24, 2016

By Gail Fry

Questions arose as to how a criminal complaint, made on May 2, involving a missing \$650.00 cell phone at the Lake Arrowhead Elementary School was handled by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department when six to ten students were taken out of class and questioned by a deputy. The Rim of the World Unified School District's (ROWUSD) Annual Notice to Parents and Guardians states, "Except with prior consent for health reasons, possession or use of electronic signaling devices is prohibited," including cell phones. *The Alpenhorn News* sought answers from San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD) Captain Donny Mahoney about the deputy's handling of the case. With regard to the fact cell phones are prohibited by ROWUSD, Mahoney responded, "The school district's policies have no effect on the law, so we would still investigate accordingly." As to its legal authority to respond to an alleged misdemeanor crime at an elementary school, Mahoney cited California Education Code Sections 48980 through 48985. Penal Code Section 26 states, "One-Children under the age of 14, in the absence of clear proof that at the time of committing the act charged against them, they knew its wrongfulness" as to whether a child can be capable of committing crimes. Education Code Section 48980 requires the governing board to "notify the parent/guardian of a minor pupil regarding the right or responsibility of the parent or guardian" under Education Code Section 35291, requiring the governing board to create rules "not inconsistent with the law" for the "discipline of the schools under its jurisdiction" and notify the parent/guardian "of the availability of rules of the district pertaining to student discipline." ROWUSD's Annual Notice to parents/guardians states, "Education Code Section 48906 requires school officials to take immediate steps to notify parents when a child is taken into custody by a peace officer..." while no guidance is

provided about when a student is questioned by law enforcement. Penal Code Section 830.1 states, "The authority of (sic) peace officers extends to any place in the state" as to "any public offense committed or which there is probable cause to believe has been committed within the political subdivision." However, Education Code Section 48984, states, "No school district shall undertake any activity covered by the sections set forth in Section 48980 with respect to any particular pupil unless the parent or guardian has been informed of such action..." A request for comment from ROWUSD about whether this law applies when a student is questioned by law enforcement went unanswered as of press time. As to its legal authority to question elementary school age juveniles at school regarding a criminal act without their parent or guardian present, Mahoney responded, "Education Code and the California Penal Code." In response to questions about whether the SBCSD is responsible to notify the student's parent/guardian before or after questioning the student, Mahoney responded, "No, if you are thinking about *Camreta vs Greene*...in 2011, the US Supreme Court ended its review of the 9th Circuit's ruling which allows officers to conduct investigations including interviews of minors without notification of the parents." As to whether the deputy involved, Freddy Perez, disclosed the names of the two minor students involved in allegedly taking the cell phone to the parent of the student whose cell phone went missing, Victor Flores, Mahoney answered, "Yes, the victim was notified of the identities, actions, and statements of the involved parties." As to whether Deputy Perez disclosed to Flores the past history of one of the students involved in allegedly taking the cell phone, where the student was the victim of a serious crime, Mahoney claimed, "No, he did not." However, Flores admitted to *The Alpenhorn News* he learned the student's background from Perez. As to whether Deputy Perez contacted the mother of one of the students who allegedly took the cell phone, informing her he had disclosed her daughter's name to Flores, Mahoney admitted the mother was informed Flores "was only notified of the identities, actions and statements of the involved parties," while denying Deputy Perez told the mother he disclosed her daughter's background, as a victim of a serious crime, and suggested the mother could be pulled over due to a hold on her license. Mahoney explained her "license was never researched, no records check conducted, and no determination made regarding her license status." "As you know, the phone was recovered and the decision not to arrest was made on behalf of the involved parties," Mahoney voiced adding, "I believe this investigation was handled very well and with a positive outcome. "I can understand how misunderstandings may have occurred during the investigation, but I assure you, only information allowed to be shared, was," Mahoney concluded.

Over 150 animals seized from Morongo Valley property

By Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Friday, June 24, 2016 10:43 pm

MORONGO VALLEY — Animal control officers seized at least 120 dogs and 40 cats from a property at 9333 Bella Vista Drive this week.

The San Bernardino County animal control division is investigating a criminal case against the owner of the property, 61-year-old Stephen Mitchell Caro, who calls his operation Paws Rescue Ranch.

Officers seized 11 live dogs from the property Wednesday after finding the body of a shepherd mix that had been chained up without water or shade, according to accounts from Caro and animal control.

The live animals were taken to a veterinarian and are now being housed at the county animal shelter in Devore, animal control program manager Greg Beck said.

Caro posted a video of himself on his Facebook page Wednesday afternoon admitting that the dog whose body was removed had died after being chained outside without water or shade.

On the video, Caro said county animal control officers visited the property last week and told him he needed to provide shade for the dogs he keeps in outside kennels.

During their visit, he said, he admitted that one of the large dogs had gotten loose and killed some ducks.

He was at the veterinarian with six of his dogs on Wednesday when animal control officers returned to his property and found that one of the outside dogs had died.

The dog's name was Othello, according to his Facebook page.

"She said the dog was chained up to the kennel and was out of water so it probably overheated just because it's been so hot," Caro said. "That story is correct."

An employee had chained the dog because its kennel needed to be fixed, according to Caro.

"I am crushed over this, crushed," he said.

He claimed on the video the other dogs did not need to be removed and were not in harm's way.

"A couple of them were older so they were losing weight and they were saying that they're not eating enough," Caro said. "We're taking care of them as much as they can."



Animal control operation

Stephen Caro, right, owner of Paws Rescue Ranch, follows an animal control officer to the back of the property Wednesday afternoon. The dog walking with them stayed on the property after animal control officers left.

Animal control officers returned to Caro's property Friday morning with a warrant to enter his house, which they had not been able to do earlier in the week. In what turned into a daylong operation, they removed more than 150 animals, including dogs, cats, rabbits and birds.

The stench of urine and feces drifted from the open door as officers led out dogs ranging in size from Chihuahuas to pit bulls and one spotted hound. Some were skinny, while others limped or had missing fur or visible injuries. Others looked well fed and healthy.

By 7 p.m., the 110th dog, a white Chihuahua mix with an injured paw, was photographed and placed in a cage in an animal control van. It appeared there were as many as 20 more dogs in the backyard.

Officers also carted out carriers with kittens and cats, numbering at least 40.

Caro watched the process, frequently speaking on his cellphone and occasionally telling officers a particular animal's name or circumstances.

He told officers some of the animals belonged to other people who had asked him to pet sit.

Caro would not speak to the Hi-Desert Star at the scene and did not return a telephone message.

Beck, the animal control program manager, said his office is investigating a criminal case against Caro for potential violations of California state law. "At this point I do envision that there is a case that's filed," he said.

The Sheriff's Department arrested Caro at 10 a.m. Friday at the Morongo Valley property on a charge of possession of a desert tortoise. He was cited and released by Friday afternoon.

A 'sanctuary' for senior animals

On his website and Facebook pages, Caro describes his operation as "a sanctuary for senior, neglected and abused animals."

People call daily to surrender animals, and the facility is at full capacity, Caro says on a video posted on his website.

He says his costs average \$10,000 to \$12,000 a month, including frequent veterinary bills. On crowdfunding pages, Caro says he is trying to raise \$1.5 million for a 134-acre sanctuary for senior animals. "We have outgrown our 2-acre parcel," one entry reads.

The property does not have a kennel license in San Bernardino County, which would be required for a large number of dogs, Beck said.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

A first-person tale: Man's murder conviction reversed after 23 years in jail

He leaves RC jail a free man

By John M. Blodgett, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Saturday, June 25, 2016



One moment William “Bill” Richards cries, the next he grins.

“It’s a complete flood,” he said. “It’s coming at me so fast, it’s just a rush.”

“It” is life as a free man, something Richards, 66, has not lived since 1993. That August, he was arrested on suspicion of murdering his wife of more than 20 years, Pamela, at their Hesperia home. The mechanical engineer came home from work just after midnight Aug. 11 and found her beaten, strangled and partly naked body outside in the yard, her head crushed.

Though Pamela’s body showed evidence of self-defense, Richards’ body had no scratches or bruises, and an expert showed that blood on his clothing supported his claim that he had cradled her prone body, not killed her. Still, in 1997, after three trials — the first two juries hung — he was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to 25 years to life.

Tuesday, when Richards walked freely out of the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga, he was flanked by Jan Stiglitz, co-director of the [California Innocence Project](#). The pro bono clinic run out of California Western School of Law has fought for Richards’ release since soon after its founding in 1999.

The nonprofit’s aim is to fight for the release of innocent prisoners. Richards’ case was an obvious choice, co-director Alex Simpson said, because “there were so many things you see that are common in wrongful convictions.”

One of those things, he said, was “questionable scientific forensic evidence” presented in the third trial, when a prosecution expert testified that Richards’ teeth matched a bite mark on Pamela’s hand.

That expert later admitted he was wrong, and in 2009 a San Bernardino Superior Court judge ruled Richard’s conviction be reversed. But that ruling was reversed by the California Court of Appeal, a decision upheld in 2013 by the California Supreme Court in a 4-3 decision.

The latter decision compelled the Project in 2015 to help introduce legislation allowing “false evidence” to include recanted expert testimony.

The bill was signed into law, the Project petitioned to have Richards’ conviction reversed, and on May 26, 2016, the California Supreme Court did so in a 7-0 decision.

For now, Richards lives in a loft in the Riverside County home of an attorney associated with the Project. He spends his days with “so many great people” from the Project helping him rejoin society. They’ve helped him get new identification and Social Security cards, and are seeking medical care for his advanced prostate cancer, a condition Richards said was insufficiently treated in prison.

Helping Richards move on is crucial, Simpson said, because exonerees, unlike parolees, are not entitled to transitional living or work assistance.

“The law is slow to catch up and acknowledge this issue,” he said. “We hope we can do whatever we can to try to ease that transition.”

Part of that effort is “finally getting Bill out from under” concerns of his case being retried for a fourth time. Simpson demurred commenting about the prospect, other than it’s unclear how the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office might proceed and he hopes it will agree to dismiss the case. It has 60 days from Richards’ release to decide.

The District Attorney’s Office did not respond to a request for comment. Spokesperson Christopher Lee has told other media outlets that the office is reviewing the matter.

Richards tries not to dwell about his years in prison, an experience he called “a struggle beyond words.” He had to believe all those years that justice would come one day, “because if you don’t believe, it just crushes you.”

He’s both grateful for and proud about the legislation introduced on his behalf.

“That’s going to save other people,” he said, adding the upheld reversal that brought it about was “devastating” at first.

Looking toward the future, Richards hopes to start an engineering business, get a new home and travel. He’s considering a move to Nevada or Arizona, where he said taxes are friendlier to the self-employed. He “definitely” wants to leave California.

Richards also wants to help fix a legal system he knows firsthand is flawed, and the Project is eager to work with him.

But something else is most pressing.

He never had a chance to grieve the loss of his wife, Richards said.

“Those emotions are just flooding in, because I couldn’t deal with them in prison.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160625/a-first-person-tale-mans-murder-conviction-reversed-after-23-years-in-jail>

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San Bernardino County offers quick, free HIV testing Monday

By [SUZANNE HURT](#)

2016-06-24 16:07:30



The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health is offering fast, free HIV testing in San Bernardino and Ontario on National HIV Testing Day on Monday, June 27.

The department is sending its mobile testing unit to the corner of Rialto Avenue and E Street in San Bernardino from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday. The unit will also offer tests at Hamburger Mary's Restaurant, 3550 E. Porsche Way in Ontario, from 8 to 11 p.m., according to a news release.

The quick test involves an oral swab, with results produced in 20 to 40 minutes.

The department's public health clinics also offer confidential standard testing for HIV, a chronic disease that can be managed with medicine and medical care.

Medications can slow HIV's progression and protect the body's immune system, according to the public health department. The county's HIV Prevention Program also offers counseling services. For more information, call 1-800-255-6560.

Contact the writer: 951-368-9444 or shurt@pe.com

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Aurora theater shooting lawsuits against theater owner dismissed

Judge R. Brooke Jackson issued the order to dismiss the lawsuits — brought by a number of survivors of the 2012 theater shooting — "with prejudice," according to federal court documents.

By CHRIS HARROP & BRANDON JOHANSSON, Staff Writers, Updated: June 26, 2016 1:24 pm

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AURORA | A consolidated group of lawsuits brought against the owner of the Aurora theater where 12 people were killed and 70 others wounded in one of the nation's worst mass shootings in 2012 were dismissed Friday, June 24, in U.S. District Court.

Judge R. Brooke Jackson issued the order to dismiss the lawsuits — brought by a number of victims of the 2012 theater shooting — “with prejudice,” according to federal court documents.

In the written order dismissing the lawsuits, Judge Jackson wrote that even if failing to provide safety measures such as an alarm on the theater's exit door or security officers for the premiere led to some of the injuries or deaths, “(James) Holmes’ premeditated and intentional actions were the predominant cause of plaintiffs’ losses,” and that any inaction by the theater owner were not “a substantial factor in causing this tragedy.”



Jackson cited a lawsuit brought by Sandy Phillips, the mother of theater shooting victim Jessica Ghawi, against the gun shops that Holmes used to purchase ammo for the massacre, noting that the court in that case came to a similar conclusion that meticulous planning on Holmes’ part was the “substantial factor” leading to the shooting.

PDF: [Judge Jackson’s Dismissal of Aurora Theater Shooting Civil Lawsuits Against Cinemark/Century Theaters \(http://auroramediagrp.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/asuplads/D.-Colo.-13-cv-01995-dckt-000028_000-filed-2016-06-24.pdf\)](http://auroramediagrp.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/asuplads/D.-Colo.-13-cv-01995-dckt-000028_000-filed-2016-06-24.pdf)

Among the plaintiffs were:

- Denise Traynom and Brandon Axelrod, who lived in Denver and survived the shooting. Axelrod injured ligaments in his knee while fleeing the shooting. Traynom was shot in her back and rear during the shooting.
- Ashley Moser, who was paralyzed and suffered a miscarriage after being shot in her chest. She also lost her 6-year-old daughter, Veronica Moser-Sullivan, who was killed in the shooting.
- Jamison Toews, the boyfriend of Ashley Moser and the father of the unborn child that was lost to miscarriage after her shooting. Toews was shot in the head during the shooting.
- Alleen “Allie” Young, who was shot in the chest and was carried out of the theater by her best friend after playing dead as the shooter walked past them.
- Chantel L. Blunk, the widow of slain victim Jonathan Blunk.
- Joshua R. Nowlan, who was shot in the leg and arm.
- Dion Rosborough, who went to the movie that night by himself and was shot from about five feet away.
- Marcus Weaver, who was sitting in the fifth row during the midnight screening of “The Dark Knight Rises” at the Century Theater. Weaver was shot in the arm as he was carrying his friend, Rebecca Wingo, out off the auditorium.

Each of the plaintiffs had claimed that the theater did not do enough to ensure their safety on the night of the shooting.

Other plaintiffs whose cases were dismissed include Tony Briscoe, Jon Boik, Evan Faris, Richele Hill, David Williams, Munirih Gravelly, Nick Gallup, Stefan Moton, Maximus Blunk and Hailey Blunk.

Jurors in a similar lawsuit against Cinemark regarding the 2012 theater shooting found the theater owner not liable for the rampage, rejecting victims' arguments that, in an age of mass shootings, the theater should have foreseen the possibility of violence at a crowded midnight premiere of a Batman film.

Several survivors and families of the dead sued the nation's third-largest theater chain, saying the Aurora theater should have had armed guards at the summer blockbuster. There also was no silent alarm that would have sounded when James Holmes slipped into an auditorium and started shooting.

The civil case was watched closely by theater security consultants, some of whom predicted that a verdict against Cinemark would mean sweeping and costly changes to the way theaters protect customers.

In that earlier lawsuit, Cinemark argued nothing could have stopped the armor-clad shooter. After months of meticulous planning, he threw gas canisters into the crowd of more than 400 and then opened fire with a shotgun, assault rifle and semi-automatic pistol.

"Cinemark endured a tremendous tragedy as did the victims of the case and the entire Aurora community ... at the hands of a madman, James Holmes," attorney Kevin Taylor told reporters after the jury's decision. "(The shooter) was clearly unpredictable, unforeseeable, unpreventable and unstoppable. ... The only thing that matches the unforeseeability of this case is the tragedy of it."

Victims also are suing Holmes' University of Colorado psychiatrist, arguing she and other university officials should have done more to stop the attack after Holmes confessed his homicidal thoughts.

— *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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The New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/28LgpGh>

U.S.

U.S. Offers to Help Florida With Overtime Costs From Massacre

By FRANCES ROBLES JUNE 21, 2016

ORLANDO, Fla. — After denying the state of Florida's petition for \$5 million in emergency funding to cover costs associated with the massacre at a popular gay nightclub, the Obama administration announced Tuesday that it would offer \$1 million to help pay for police overtime.

Attorney General Loretta Lynch visited Orlando on Tuesday, nine days after Omar Mateen, who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, opened fire at the Pulse nightclub. Ms. Lynch met with some of the wounded and relatives of the 49 people killed in the attack, as well as with top law enforcement officials in the region.

Ms. Lynch said the Department of Justice would make \$1 million available to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement so local jurisdictions could cover the overtime costs associated with the killings.

"We will move quickly to make the award as soon as possible," she said, adding that the administration was also providing counseling resources for traumatized officers and medics.

"We are also making federal emergency funds and victim compensation funding available to cover, for example, family travel expense, medical, mental health

expenses and other costs related to this tragedy,” she added.

Her announcement came after Gov. Rick Scott criticized the administration for declining his application for \$5 million of Department of Homeland Security emergency funding.

In a letter on Monday, the administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, W. Craig Fugate, told the governor that the request, made the day after the shooting, had been denied because the appeal did not explain how the incident was beyond the capability of the state and local governments. The request also did not demonstrate how federal funds could help protect lives and property, the letter said.

“An emergency declaration is not appropriate for this incident,” Mr. Fugate wrote in the letter, which was released by the governor’s office.

Records show that FEMA has approved the vast majority of emergency funding requests made after hurricanes and other disasters, but that no state has applied in the wake of a mass shooting.

Mr. Scott called the denial “incredibly disappointing” and said the state would appeal.

“It is unthinkable that President Obama does not define this as an emergency,” Mr. Scott, a Republican, said in a statement. “We are committing every state resource possible to help the victims and the community heal, and we expect the same from the federal government.”

Sheriff Jerry L. Demings of Orange County said he learned about the \$1 million at the news conference when Ms. Lynch announced it. His department was still trying to determine how much had been spent, he said.

“One million dollars?” he said. “You know what? It’s a start.”

Sheriff Demings confirmed that Mr. Mateen, a 29-year-old security guard, had visited the nightclub several hours before the 2 a.m. shooting spree. He appeared to have stepped outside for some period of time and returned just before firing on the

patrons, he said.

He declined to give any more details. Ms. Lynch also declined to provide any new information on the case.

She said the agency would reveal more information later, including results of firearms testing to determine whether any victims had been killed by police bullets. She also said she would eventually release the audio tape of Mr. Mateen's 911 call.

The administration was criticized Monday for releasing a partial transcript of just one of his calls, which deleted references Mr. Mateen made to the Islamic State and its leader. A few hours later, the Department of Justice released a version without the redactions.

Ms. Lynch's visit to Orlando came as the downtown area surrounding the Pulse nightclub began returning to normalcy.

"There is no doubt that this was a shattering attack," Ms. Lynch said. "But the message of Orlando goes far beyond one night of unspeakable terror. The message of Orlando that I have seen today — and what the American people have seen in the wake of this horrific assault — is a message of determination to remove hatred and intolerance from our midst."

Richard Pérez-Peña contributed reporting from New York.

A version of this article appears in print on June 22, 2016, on page A13 of the New York edition with the headline: U.S. Offers Florida Help With Costs in Massacre.

In a grieving city, where talk of terrorism and guns falls flat

Following the nightclub massacre in Orlando, Fla., partisan reactions fell along familiar lines

Democrats called for stricter gun control measures, while Republicans blamed President Barack Obama

In San Bernardino, residents fear, the problem goes beyond the scope of politics



A hymn for Orlando from San Bernardino 0:56

1 of 2

More than six months after the San Bernardino attack, a memorial of flowers, stuffed animals, American flags and hand-painted signs still stands at an intersection near the Inland Regional Center. Now residents are also praying - and singing - for Orlando. David Siders The Sacramento Bee

By David Siders

San Bernardino

In the days following the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando, Fla., Donald Trump renewed his call to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the United States. Hillary Clinton rebuked him. The U.S. Senate took up – and rejected – a set of gun control measures, and Democrats staged a chaotic sit-in on the House floor.

In San Bernardino, a roomful of Rotarians prayed.

“We know that right here, across the street in December, we had our own attack,” Rudy Westervelt, a district governor of the service group, said as several dozen business and community leaders bowed their heads over lunch at a golf course here.

He asked for “strength to overcome these things.”

In San Bernardino, where 14 people were killed last year in a rampage at a social services center, the Pulse nightclub shooting – and the political fallout – arrived as an echo.

Before President Barack Obama’s visit to Orlando, where a gunman killed 49 people at a gay nightclub, this city heard the president once again lament a pattern of mass shootings in America. Following each attack, Democrats heightened their appeals for stricter gun controls, while Republicans blamed the administration for its response to terrorist groups abroad.

Yet the experience of San Bernardino has laid bare a shortcoming of political overtures in an election year – a disconnect not only between politics and a community’s grief, but also its fear that averting catastrophe will require more than any policy can provide.

“Some of the prevention is knowing our neighbors and knowing each other,” Westervelt said. “It’s not political.”

While Washington, D.C., flared last week, the reaction here hewed less to “Bowling for Columbine,” Michael Moore’s politically charged documentary, than Robert Putnam’s bleak account of deteriorating social ties in America, “Bowling Alone.”

In Southern California’s Inland Empire, beleaguered by poverty, crime and the effects of San Bernardino’s municipal bankruptcy, politics “gets frustrating so quick,” Juan Espinosa, a 21-year-old student, said at a gay club in Riverside one recent afternoon.

Seated beneath paintings of nude men and women and music videos playing on 14 screens, Espinosa said he fears that even if gun control measures he supports are enacted, they would only enrage gun advocates. He filled his cup from a pitcher of Bud Light, sipped and calculated which person – the bartender, a visitor or him – would die first if a gunman came through the front door.

“I try to be optimistic,” he said.

No matter what you do, there are always crazy people.

Amanda Knudson, a 29-year-old dietician from Redlands

Few issues in America are as partisan as gun control, and the San Bernardino attack did little to change attitudes about the subject in California. According to a January Field Poll, 57 percent of voters in this heavily Democratic state say it is more important to impose greater controls on gun ownership than to protect the right to own guns, a finding in line with polls going back to 1999.

A smaller majority – 54 percent – say stricter gun controls could be at least somewhat effective at reducing violent crime, according to the poll. But 71 percent of California voters think it is at least somewhat likely another terrorist attack will occur in California in the near future, and only one in five voters are very confident in the ability of law enforcement agencies to break up terrorist plots.

“There’s really no perfect ideal,” said Amanda Knudson, a 29-year-old dietitian who bowls at an alley near the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino. “No matter what you do, there are always crazy people.”

Mark DiCamillo, director of the Field Poll, compared the public’s response to gun control proposals to the rigidity of lines drawn on climate change or Obama’s federal health care overhaul.

“No matter what new information you bring to the table, it doesn’t seem to change public attitudes,” DiCamillo said. “As soon as you raise the topic, people’s partisanship really dominates.”

At a prayer service last week at Bethel Congregational United Church of Christ in Ontario, about 25 miles west of San Bernardino, the Rev. Sylvia Lee Mann asked, “How do we respond to this killer?”

A woman in the third row of the century-old sanctuary cried, and the reverend said, “By loving each other, by dancing again.”

Death is certain, life is a cycle. If we do the good thing, tranquillity and peace will come of it.

Suldan Ahmad, of Downey

Then congregants lit candles, and one of them, Virginia Shannon, 77, said she was “just thinking that I have to have a candle and meditate every time I’m faced with Trump.”

In a speech on June 13, one day after the shooting in Orlando, the Republican Party’s presumptive presidential nominee told a crowd at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire that “Hillary Clinton can never claim to be a friend of the gay community as long as she continues to support immigration policies that bring Islamic extremists to our country.”

The shooter, Omar Mateen, was born in New York to parents from Afghanistan, but Trump said he was only in the country “because we allowed his family to come here.”

Clinton, speaking in Cleveland the same day, warned against “inflammatory, anti-Muslim rhetoric” in the wake of the attack.

“Threatening to ban the families and friends of Muslim Americans, as well as millions of Muslim businesspeople and tourists from entering our country, hurts the vast majority of Muslims who love freedom and hate terror,” said Clinton, the Democratic Party’s presumptive nominee.

In the parking lot of the Dar Al Uloom Al Islamiyah of America mosque in San Bernardino, where one of the shooters in that city, Syed Rizwan Farook, once prayed, Suldan Ahmad recalled that a mosque in Coachella, 80 miles southeast of San Bernardino, was set ablaze following the attack. For his beard and dress, he said, passers-by have occasionally called him a “terrorist” since the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

But Ahmad, a retired food distributor, said many non-Muslims have reacted warmly to him, too, including one man who asked to join him in prayer several years ago at a gas station outside of Bakersfield.

Ahmad, 65, chewed on a stick and searched the trunk of his Toyota Camry for a tool to salvage a piece of metal from a desk in a nearby dumpster. He said he does not worry about Trump’s proposals or about the presidential election, comparing his life to a cellphone, his death the battery running out.

“Death is certain, life is a cycle,” Ahmad said. “If we do the good thing, tranquillity and peace will come of it.”

More than six months after the San Bernardino attack, a memorial of flowers, stuffed animals, American flags and hand-painted signs still stands at an intersection near the Inland Regional Center.

Cutouts of stars are hung from trees, alongside a white cross and a sign: “Always in our hearts.”

In a vacant lot facing the memorial, Republican Paul Chabot, a military veteran campaigning to unseat Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Redlands, has placed a sign of his own, with his name and the admonition: “Counter terrorism.”

One of Chabot’s college fraternity brothers, Michael Wetzel, was among those killed at the Inland Regional Center, and Chabot is convinced of national security’s salience in the upcoming election.

The Obama administration’s policies abroad, he said, “are just very frustrating.”

Who has the answer? It certainly isn’t the political leaders.

Judith Valles, former mayor of San Bernardino

“What happened in Orlando would never have happened if there wasn’t such a worldwide growth of terrorism,” Chabot said. “I think it’s the lack of, the lack of a nation that has a resolve to fight evil as we did to defeat the Nazis.”

He said he fears that after a series of mass shootings, “We are almost becoming numb now to massive attacks.”

Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California, said one change evident in the aftermath of Orlando is that some Republican lawmakers have “invested a lot more time and energy into promoting their own alternatives than they have in the past.” This includes proposals by Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Chuck Grassley of Iowa involving background checks and the availability of guns to people on terror watch lists. Still, the measures were among Senate proposals that failed amid overwhelming Republican opposition.

“The more frequent these tragedies occur, the harder the lines of disagreement seem to become,” Schnur said. “I don’t know anyone on either side of this debate who’s eager to see more mass shootings, but people on both

sides of this agreement have very different ideas on how to proceed.”

Jonathan Ingram, a Murrieta councilman and vice president of the Republican Party of Riverside County, said he became “flabbergasted” while listening to an Obama speech on the radio after the Orlando attack, leading him to post a blistering critique on Facebook of Obama’s foreign policy record and gun control proposals.

“We’re at a point where we’re allowing this type of stuff to metastasize, and it’s like a cancer,” he said.

Yet Ingram said he supports tightening background checks and prohibiting gun purchases for people who are on terror watch lists or suffer from mental illnesses. He was pained by what he called “knee-jerk reactions ... from all sides of the aisle.”

Early in the Republican primary, Trump benefited in public opinion polls from his focus on immigration and terrorism following the attack in San Bernardino and, before that, Paris. California is so reliably Democratic that his proposals are unpopular here, and he is unlikely to seriously compete with Clinton in the state.

But in the Inland Empire, one of California’s more conservative areas, the New York businessman enjoys a following.

At Dave’s Gun & Archery in San Bernardino, novelty Trump bills are taped to a display case and a salesman, Mike End, said that “for us, gun-wise, everybody’s for Trump.”

Of Clinton, a customer who declined to give his name said, “I’d like to see them hang her out in the range out there.”

End said there was no uptick in gun sales following the San Bernardino attack, but more people sought training. Among them was Amber Carlson, a student from Grand Terrace who hoped to practice on a Smith & Wesson 500, a revolver so powerful it can take down big game.

Carlson, 25, said she started worrying about defending herself after the attack in San Bernardino.

“That was really close to home,” she said.

At the golf course in San Bernardino, Dale Marsden, superintendent of the San Bernardino City Unified School District, said the Orlando attack was a “reminder these events can happen anytime and anywhere.”

But over iced tea and a buffet lunch at the Rotary luncheon, talk turned quickly to job training and literacy programs. Marsden said developing better technological and cybersecurity measures could help avert future terrorist attacks. A more fundamental charge, he said, is to “talk with each other and learn from each other.”

Former San Bernardino Mayor Judith Valles, who favors stricter gun control measures, said that when Republicans point out that criminals will get guns anyway, “You can’t argue with that. They’re right.”

“There’s got to be a lot of introspection in the world about what we are doing to each other,” she said. “I don’t have an answer.”

Before leaving the clubhouse at the golf course, Valles turned and added, “Who has the answer? It certainly

isn't the political leaders."

Where they stand

On gun control

Hillary Clinton

- Would seek to tighten regulations on gun show and internet gun sales and to prevent domestic abusers from possessing firearms.
- Supports repealing a 2005 law that prevents gun manufacturers and dealers in certain cases from being sued.
- Supports increasing restrictions on gun purchases by people on terror watch lists. "If you are too dangerous to get on a plane," she said, "you are too dangerous to buy a gun."

Donald Trump

- Supports Second Amendment rights that he said in a position paper "shall not be infringed upon. Period."
- Would focus attention on crime suppression and mental health programs to reduce gun violence, while seeking to improve existing systems of background checks.
- Calls gun and magazine bans a "total failure," saying "law-abiding people should be allowed to own the firearm of their choice."

On national security

Hillary Clinton

- Has called for a commission to examine military spending.
- Says she would "strengthen alliances and nurture new relationships to tackle shared challenges such as climate change, cyberthreats, and highly contagious diseases."

Donald Trump

- Says he can build a stronger military for less by avoiding expensive weapons systems purchased because "the company that makes the missiles is a contributor."
- Would temporarily prevent all Muslims from entering the United States.
- Would return to the Middle East Syrian refugees accepted by the Obama administration.

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DRONES: "If You Fly, We Can't"

in [News](#), [Ticker](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on June 26, 2016 at 12:05 am /



The U. S. Forest Service has issued a new update related to Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and reminds drone operators that "If you fly, we can't." (File Photo)

By Michael P. Neufeld

Mountain Communities – Last year about this time, drones disrupted wildfire aerial operations on the Sterling

Fire and the Lake Fire causing the grounding of the tankers assisting firefighters on the ground.



San Bernardino National Forest Supervisor Jody Noiron at the Forest Service Tanker Base in San Bernardino. (Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

A media briefing was held at the U.S. Forest Service Tanker Base in San Bernardino after the June 24 and 25, 2015 incidents stressing the importance of not flying Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) over wildfires.

"If unmanned aircraft are in the air," San Bernardino National Forest Supervisor Jody Noiron reminded the public during last year's press conference, *"we can't fly."*

FOREST SERVICE UPDATE

A year later, the U.S. Forest Service revisited the UAS issue while indicating that the agency is highly interested in new technologies and believes there is potential to fly Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to support a host of natural resource management activities, including forest health protection, wildfire suppression, research, recreational impacts, and law enforcement.



The Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management team indicates that in addition, other federal, state, and local agencies; researchers; businesses; members of the public; and others are interested in flying UAS on National Forest System lands for a variety of purposes.

"The U.S. Forest Service is working to integrate UAS in furthering the agency's mission and to provide for UAS flights by other entities on National Forest System lands in alignment with FAA regulations," a statement posted on the U.S. Forest Service website states.

UAS AIRCRAFT

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has regulatory authority over all airspace.

"The FAA and the U.S. Forest Service consider all UAS, regardless of size or weight, to be aircraft," the statement continued. "All UAS flown on National Forest System lands must comply with FAA and U. S. Forest Service laws, regulations and policies."

WETIP HOTLINE

Anyone with information about illegal drone operator(s) flying over wildfires are encouraged to call 1-800-78-CRIME or visit [WETIP](#) online.



Drone operations over wildfires are against the law and could potentially down a VLAT (very large air tanker) like this one at the U.S. Forest Service Tanker Base at San Bernardino International Airport. (File Photo by ROTWNEWS.com)

(106)



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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Availability, affordability big challenges for Inland Empire homeowners, renters

Availability and affordability big challenges for homeowners and renters

By Roger Ruvolo, Staff Writer

Saturday, June 25, 2016



You might think Inland-area renters and homebuyers would have a little easier time of it than people closer to the coast. But, as elsewhere, among the top concerns for Inland residents are availability and affordability.

A couple of Inland cases illustrate the situation.

Mortgage under water

When the housing market went south in 2008 and 2009, thousands of Inland homeowners found they were “under water” on their mortgages — they were paying for the home they bought at a much higher price and interest rate than the home would fetch at sale.

Someone who bought a home for \$380,000 before the market collapse would take quite a hit selling the home for under \$200,000.

Brooke Elia, for example.

A Riverside attorney, Elia and her husband, Andrew, got into such a home as a starter in Riverside. “I had just started law school,” she said. “(The house) was quite small. We bought at the peak and it had a high interest rate.”

Then came the crash. Elia had heard from friends who began walking away from mortgages or short-selling their homes. “But we didn’t want bad credit,” Elia recalled.

“So the market crashes, and now we have this huge interest rate, high payment, two small children,” Elia said. They were a classic underwater case.

About three years ago, a Realtor friend found a nearby rental that was roomier for the Elia family. They rented out their first home, but for only 50 percent of their payment — because it was appraised for so much less.

“We finally sold the other house this past December,” Elia said. “We still had to pay about \$35,000 to get out of it, but we’re out of it. Definitely an uphill battle ... when that happens, you don’t have the savings to put 20 percent down on a new house (to avoid premium mortgage insurance), and homes in Riverside are really expensive.”

Looking for vacancies

Finding an affordable —and available — rental was difficult for Yi Mao, a doctoral candidate in international economics at UC Riverside.

“We called many apartments around the campus,” Mao said. “Some were posted at stores, some online, some advertised. They all say, call again in July, there are no vacancies.”

She would call again. And again. And on the rare occasions she could find a suitable unit, the price was simply too high.

“When I first moved here in 2014, my friend rented a room at a big apartment house on University; she paid \$1,000 for a 2-bed, 2-bath. ... Last year I called, they said the price is up, \$1,050. Fifty dollars, I think that’s reasonable. But then this year I called, they said \$1,550 to \$1,850! ... Hundreds? Students can’t absorb an increase like that.”

Mao reckons the price and availability crunch are the product of two things —more students and very little new construction.

The university’s enrollment has been growing — from 20,692 last academic year to 21,539 this year. UC Riverside estimates its enrollment will surpass 22,000 this fall.

As for construction, figures from the Building Industry Association show a significant decline in permits granted in the two-county area. Comparing recent permits with those granted in 2005, before the crash:

Western Riverside County: 22,028 in 2005 compared with 3,234 last year.

San Bernardino County: 16,679 in 2005, down to about 3,800 in 2016.

Mao eventually found a room — an anthropology student was seeking a roommate. They’re paying on a lease for a 2-bed, 2-bath unit that was signed before the big price increases. It’s still a pretty steep price but they are coping with it.

“If they’re this crowded, that’s why they have the confidence to raise rents so much,” Mao said.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/business/20160625/availability-affordability-big-challenges-for-inland-empire-homeowners-renters>

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Shortage of homes in Inland Empire boosting prices, pushing down affordability



Dave Miller, of Moreno Valley, says for the past 11 years he has been traveling the same freeways to his work. ED CRISOSTOMO/Staff Photographer

By Jonathan Lansner and Marilyn Kalfus, Staff Writers

Posted: 06/25/16, 6:45 PM PDT | Updated: 1 day ago

Connor Elia, 7, and sister Addison Elia, 8, hold the sold sign as mom Brooke Elia, 34, all of Riverside with the realtors sign in front of their Wood Streets area home in Riverside. TERRY PIERSON/Staff Photographer

Dave Miller leaves work in his gold GMC Sierra in midafternoon, loaded up with Arizona iced tea and sesame seeds. He tunes the radio to 95.5 FM KLOS, classic rock.

An auto maintenance supervisor in Garden Grove, Miller lives in Moreno Valley. On a bad day — a Friday — the drive home takes three hours.

The roughly 120-mile round-trip commute is a trade-off. Miller and his wife, Gigi, a hairstylist, bought their 2,000-square-foot, four-bedroom house with a three-car garage last year.

The price: \$285,000.

“In Orange County, I couldn’t have half of what I have,” said Miller, 49.

Indeed, the Millers paid less than half of Orange County’s latest median home sale price, which hit a record

high \$651,500 in May, according to data firm CoreLogic. Riverside County's median was \$330,000, and the six-county Southern California region reached \$459,500.

The region's housing crunch is steep, by any economic measure. A database of housing affordability statistics created by The Associated Press shows Southern California's two main metropolitan regions — Los Angeles/Orange counties and the Inland Empire — consistently rank among the U.S. markets that most stretch the household budgets of both homeowners and renters. Data used census figures through 2014, the latest available.

Among the 40 largest U.S. metro areas, census figures show L.A.-O.C. had the lowest homeownership rate, the most financially stressed owners and the highest percentage of middle-aged households who were renters. The Inland Empire had the most people per rental unit, the highest share of single-family homes rented, and the second-highest level of financially stressed renters.

The problem has been three decades in the making. The region's population and economic growth has outpaced local willingness to build more housing. For example, for every four jobs created in L.A.-O.C. and the Inland Empire between 2011-2014, only roughly one new housing unit was permitted.

All told, a shortage of housing options has boosted home prices and rents and essentially raised the entrance fee to Southern California living.

Lucy Dunn, a former state housing chief who now heads the Orange County Business Council, is frustrated by the response to the housing shortfall not just regionally, but statewide. Construction is problematic, what Dunn sees as self-inflicted hurdles from unfriendly review processes to quirky environmental laws to unyielding neighbors.

"It's simple. It's about the supply," Dunn says.

Advertisement

Just ask Dave Miller.

Miller, who works for Orange County Vector Control, hits the road at 4 a.m. His morning drive goes more smoothly, though there's some congestion, even then. His average trip to work takes about one hour and 15 minutes.

Bob Irish, the real estate broker who sold the Millers their house in Sunnymead Ranch, has offices in Orange and Riverside counties. He sees homebuyers getting priced out of both places.

Say an average worker can afford to spend \$400,000 on a house, he said. That's likely to get them only a condo in Orange County.

"Even then, it's a little one," he said.

"\$400,000 used to get you Corona, then Riverside. Now you have to go out to Moreno Valley to find it," said Irish, who owns Newport Realty in Newport Beach and Lake Hills Realty in Riverside.

"I think we're running out of room on prices," the broker said. "We're back at over \$200 a foot in Riverside. At the bottom (of the housing crash) we were at \$100 a foot. And you could buy whatever you wanted."

Steep costs

The Great Recession, while painful for most households across the region, ended up being extra painful for renters.

Easy lending terms of the past decade's boom allowed too many unqualified house hunters to buy homes. When the economy practically collapsed in 2009-10, numerous families lost their homes to foreclosure. It was a double-whammy: depressing home values and boosting the need for rentals from displaced households.

Cheap interest rates, used to stimulate the ailing economy, was a boon to the remaining homeowners. As a result, census stats show that between 2010 and 2014, the cost of owning a home dropped 10 percent in L.A.-O.C. and 18 percent in the Inland Empire.

Renters were not as lucky.

Heavy demand for rentals pushed up already lofty costs by 3 percent in L.A.-O.C. In the same four-year period, rental costs dropped in the Inland Empire by just 2 percent, census data show.

As a result, 55 percent of Inland Empire renters were financially stressed in 2014, by census math. It was the second-highest share of renters spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing among the 40 largest markets. L.A.-O.C. was third at 53 percent. (Miami was the worst.)

Housing costs also strapped local homeowners. Census stats show 40.5 percent of L.A.-O.C. owners were spending 30 percent-plus on housing in 2014, the highest in the nation. In the Inland Empire, it's 38.8 percent financially stressed owners vs. 29.5 percent average among the top 40 U.S. markets.

"Even before we had a robust job market we had a housing problem," said Leslie Appleton-Young, chief economist for the California Association of Realtors. "We're doing a very poor job of accommodating our population."

Housing's steep financial toll isn't just a simple pocketbook issue.

It has forced people to cram into residential units — or take long commutes — to save money. That crowds neighborhoods and freeways and puts extra wear and tear on the region's infrastructure.

To combat financial strain, local renters doubled up in pricey units. The Inland Empire in 2014 had 3.3 people per rental, tops among the 40 largest U.S. markets, census data show. L.A.-O.C. has the second-most crowded rentals, with 2.9 people per unit.

Max Gardner sees many of these housing-linked woes play out in his job as chief executive of United Way Orange County, which supports many nonprofit efforts to combat everything from homelessness to poverty to educational deficiencies.

Inadequate housing disrupts the quality of life for financially stressed households, Gardner says. It can create

family relationship problems or health issues. Youngsters in such situations may struggle at school. These challenges can compound on a family and limit future earnings potential as well.

“If you don’t have a holistic solution, we’re not going to change the fundamental problems,” he says.

Growing pains

In many ways, the housing crunch is an outgrowth of a solid economic recovery.

Economist Christopher Thornberg doesn’t see a housing affordability problem, noting a decent pace of homebuying after the recession. Rather, there’s a huge imbalance between the success of the region’s job market growing rapidly out of the Great Recession and residential construction.

“Demand is driven by a hot economy and one of the most sublime living environments in the world,” says Thornberg, head of the UC Riverside business school’s forecasting center. “Supply is constrained because we refuse to take any real actions. We’re becoming a country club region. We are squeezing the little people and keeping the place for the more well-heeled.”

Between 2010 and 2014, L.A.-O.C. added 349,000 jobs — 6.7 percent growth that easily topped the 3.9 percent growth seen in the nation’s 40 largest metro areas combined, government job stats show. The Inland Empire added 109,000 jobs, 9.6 percent growth, in the same period.

But developers were scarred from recessionary losses and limited by skittish lenders unwilling to fund much new construction. As a result, construction of new homes and apartments stalled to a pace that’s at least half of what was considered necessary to house the region’s new workers.

The mismatch means in Long Beach that only roughly 2 percent of apartments are empty, says Spencer Pabst of the Pabst Kinney brokerage. A new rental listing will quickly get two or three applications without those apartment seekers ever seeing the unit.

“If there’s demand, it’s going to increase prices,” Pabst said. “The market for apartment buildings has probably been the hottest asset class in real estate.”

Consider the supply shortfall. In the 2004-07 boom, developers in the L.A.-O.C. area filed permits to build 131,000 resident units, according to the Real Estate Research Council of Southern California. Post-recession, between 2011-14, just 87,000 units were planned — or roughly one unit for every four new jobs.

The building drop was sharper in the Inland Empire. Before the recession, developers filed 163,000 building permits. After the downturn officially ended, permitting ran at one-fifth of the boom’s pace — just 30,000 units — in 2011-2014.

Thornberg fears the housing crunch is pushing middle-income workers out of the region.

“We’ve ended up with a critical labor shortage in what I’ll call ‘midskill’ jobs,” he said. “Need a machinist or a construction worker? Good luck finding one.”

Postscript

The regional housing crunch hasn't abated in the past two years.

Consider that homes have appreciated far faster than local paychecks. That shows up in one measure of home affordability from the National Association of Home Builders, which reflects home gains outstripping raises by at least 5-to-1 in two years.

By the association's math, just 15.6 percent of homes sold in Los Angeles in the first quarter met "affordable" standards. That's down from 17.7 percent in 2014.

Orange County affordability fell to 16.2 percent from 17.4 percent. And the Inland Empire, far more affordable at 43.4 percent in 2016's first three months, is down, too, from 46.8 percent two years ago.

It's a dilemma that's nudging the public — especially in the Western U.S. — to think that an affordable roof over their head, owned or rented, might be a dream.

A recent MacArthur Foundation survey found 77 percent of those polled in Western states agreed it is harder today to have stable, affordable housing than it was for previous generations. That's the highest share of housing angst of any U.S. region and above the 68 percent who felt the same nationwide.

The poll found 49 percent in Western states said housing affordability was a serious problem in their community, highest of the four regions tracked and above the 39 percent found nationwide.

The growing cost challenges also were found nationwide to be steeper for renters (76 percent agreeing) than homeowners (64 percent) and among lower-income households (76 percent of those making under \$40,000 a year).

It's not that the 1,200 Americans polled in April and May are down on homeownership, as 60 percent saw homeownership as a solid investment vs. 50 percent two years ago.

Instead, Rebecca Naser of Hart Research, which conducted the poll, said Americans see housing as a critical component to financial well-being.

Despite an overall improving economy and real estate markets, housing costs are stressing many families. Naser noted 53 percent of those polled said they had to make some sacrifices due to high housing costs, and of those making sacrifices, 24 percent worked extra hours or took a second job.

"People look at the (positive) economic indicators and don't see that in their own lives," Naser said. "People had to go into the red in wake of the housing crisis, and they haven't caught up."

Affordability

Here's a look at the local house hunter's affordability challenge using one benchmark, an index managed by the National Association of Home Builders. Here's how first-quarter data stacked up vs. 2014 trends:

Inland Empire: 43.4 percent of homes affordable this year vs. 46.8 percent in 2014. Home prices rose 11.5 percent, incomes up 1.2 percent.

Los Angeles County: 15.6 percent of homes sold in 2016 deemed affordable to the median household income vs. 17.7 percent in 2014. This was the result of home prices rising 11.9 percent as incomes increased just 2.4 percent since 2014.

Orange County: 16.2 percent of homes affordable this year vs. 17.4 percent in 2014. Home prices rose 7.9 percent, incomes up 1.9 percent.

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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (<http://www.dailybulletin.com>)

Why the Inland Empire's youth unemployment rate is so high

Inland high school graduates need more education to avoid unemployment cracks, a scholar says

By Fielding Buck, The Press-Enterprise

Sunday, June 26, 2016



There is a category of young people that falls between the cracks, those who aren't in school and are not working.

"You can't always tell what's going on with them just by looking at the unemployment and employment stats," said Martha Ross, a fellow in the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program.

Ross and her colleagues are filling in that gap with a study called "Employment and Disconnection Among Teens and Young Adults."

Findings for the Riverside/San Bernardino metropolitan area reinforce what experts have been saying for years: The Inland Empire needs to build up its education infrastructure to built up its economic base.

"I think that being ready for the workforce in this 21st century basically means being ready for post-secondary education," said Pamela Clute, UC Riverside mathematics professor emerita.

"Sixty-five percent of all jobs today require education beyond high school. When you look at the Inland Empire and you look at the postsecondary college-going rate, be it community colleges or four-year institutions, it is below the state level. I think that's why so many institutions K through college are collaborating on ways to get more

kids ready for college and into college."

Using U.S. Census data from 2008 to 2014, the Brookings study looks at "disconnected youths" in two age groups, 16 to 19 and 20 to 24. To provide context, it also looked at adults 25 to 54, Ross said in a phone interview.

It found the Riverside/San Bernardino area's employment rates on the whole lower than the national average, but for young people among the lowest. Ross said that in 2014 teen employment was 17 percent compared with U.S. average of 29 percent. The employment rate for those 20 to 24 was 58 percent compared with the national average of 65 percent.

Teen unemployment rates reached a high of nearly 40 percent in Riverside.

Employment data measure the share of the population that's working. Unemployment data measures the share of the population that is actively looking for work.

While the study didn't look at causes for low employment, Ross said it showed disparities in education between employed and unemployed young people.

“Many of them have graduated from high school,” Ross said of disconnected youth. “They’re not all high school dropouts by a long shot. I think what happens for most of them is they finish high school and then they don’t have a clear plan of what to do next.”

But she observed that “people in Riverside who have a bachelor’s or an associate’s degree, they’re doing pretty well.”

Disconnected youths often come from families that don’t direct them toward college or vocational programs.

“High school is the last publicly funded, universal institution that touches everyone. And we’ve had a big, big focus on preventing dropouts, which is as it should be,” Ross said. “But this shows that we also really need to pay attention to what happens after high school.”

Inland schools are “tremendously improving” on that point, said Clute. Statistics presented recently at UC Riverside by Hans Johnson of the Public Policy Institute of California bears out that observation. Johnson said that the percentage of high school graduates in Riverside County who have completed required courses for the UC and CSU systems rose from 34.5 in 2005 to 39.9 in 2015. In San Bernardino County, the share rose from 22.9 percent to 33.8 percent.

“This is really good news,” Johnson said. “A lot of people in California don’t realize that our K-12 system, for all its problems and all the legitimate concerns we have, is actually doing a better job at preparing students for college than it has in the past.”

There is still much work to be done, particularly in the mathematics field, according to Clute, who is an advocate for STEM education, an acronym for science, technology, engineering and math.

“Math competency is a huge issue,” she said. “By just about any piece of data you look at, the math competency of students in general in the United States is far inferior to other countries around the world. The Inland Empire is not unique in their math issue.”

Young people need to master creative thinking to be competitive in the workplace, according to Clute. She has been active in the annual STEP Conference by the Science and Technology Education Partnership, which brings together thousands of 4th- through 12th-grade students for two days of entertaining challenges. It will take place Oct. 5-6 at Bourns Inc. in Riverside.

“Building innovative capacity in the workers of the future is absolutely crucial. Innovative capacity is the ability to take ordinary knowledge and use it in a creative way to develop something new, basically, that can be marketed worldwide and improve the quality of life for all,” Clute said. “Sixty percent of the new jobs will require the innovative skill possessed by only 20 percent of the current workforce. So I think when we look at our young people and what the crucial skills are today, getting that innovative thinking is at the top of the list to be ready for a worldwide workforce.”

The phenomenon of disconnected youth is getting attention in public policy circles because the stakes for this group are so high, Ross said.

“They are at risk for a lot of bad outcomes down the road. As the economy has shifted more toward high skills, having more than a high school diploma has become increasingly important. And those people who aren’t on track to achieve that are looking at poor labor market prospects down the line.”

URL: <http://www.dailybulletin.com/social-affairs/20160626/why-the-inland-empire-youth-unemployment-rate-is-so-high>

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Highland to start review of Harmony project Thursday

Master-planned community proposal calls for 3,600 homes

By Sandra Emerson, Redlands Daily Facts

Saturday, June 25, 2016



HIGHLAND >> The City Council meets Thursday to start its review of the proposed Harmony master-planned community.

The [Harmony project](#) proposes to build more than 3,600 homes, as well as parks and recreation areas, natural open space, a fire station with a police substation, an elementary school and community facilities on 1,658 acres north of Mill Creek, south and west of the San Bernardino National Forest and east of Greenspot Road.

Upland-based Lewis Group of Companies is developing the project for Orange County, the land owner.

“We feel that it’s a good development that would be good for the city of Highland,” said Randall Lewis, executive vice president of the Lewis Group. “We think there are a lot of great answers to many of the questions that have been raised and we’re hopeful that it will get approved.”

But, Lewis said, he anticipates there will be at least a couple of meetings on the project.

The [Planning Commission](#) held three meetings on the project before recommending its approval in May. The meetings were all around five hours long.

The commission heard from more than three dozen people, most of whom were opposed to or concerned about the project.

Residents from Highland, Mentone and Redlands have cited concerns about the project’s potential impact on traffic, the environment and wildlife, local schools as well as flood, fire and earthquake risks.

Wendy Rea, third-generation Mentone resident and founder of Greenspot Residents Association, said additional studies on the land must be done before putting people and homes there.

“We feel it is wholly unsafe to develop in this canyon,” Rea said. “We have yet to see a proposal that would protect both health and human safety and wildlife.”

The council will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday at City Hall, 27215 Base Line in Highland.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160625/highland-to-start-review-of-harmony-project-thursday>

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Hundreds take part in annual Sunset Rotary Tinman Triathlon at CSUSB

Hundreds take part in annual Sunset Rotary event at Cal State San Bernardino

By Imani Tate, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Sunday, June 26, 2016



SAN BERNARDINO >> Using his big, booming voice and waving his arms in counter circles, Doug Bartlett conducted “The Star-Spangled Banner” like a coach revving up the adrenaline and enthusiasm of athletes of all ages, cultures and skills standing quietly or pacing anxiously before they took off in the first leg of the Tinman Triathlon Sunday.

Bartlett, treasurer of the Colton Rotary Club, was among 100 volunteers who helped San Bernardino’s Sunset Rotary Club members stage their 30th annual sporting-recreational-philanthropic event at Cal State San Bernardino.

Triathlon participants started with a 5K walk/run, then leaped onto bicycles and whipped around the university campus before venturing into Devil’s Canyon above the school.

• Photos: [30th annual Sunset Rotary Tinman Triathlon in San Bernardino](#)

By the time participants hit the campus pool for the late-morning swimming at the end of the triathlon, they were breathless, ready for a cooling dip to reduce the day’s steadily climbing temperatures. But they were all still smiling, obviously happy they had achieved personal goals and finished.

The triathlon also included races designed for challenged athletes and children.

Nearly 600 Inland Empire athletes and 400 enthusiastic supporters converged on the CSUSB campus at 5:30 a.m. Sunday for the triathlon. The event had three primary purposes: to raise money for youth scholarships, charitable causes and polio prevention; promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness and provide a family-friendly environment where everyone could enjoy recreational fun together.

The club dedicated this year’s triathlon to the memories of the victims of the terror attack at the Inland Regional Center on Dec. 2.

San Bernardino Councilman Henry Nickel said, besides being the largest single event in his fifth ward each year, the triathlon symbolizes the camaraderie and collective hope of San Bernardino families, citizens and neighbors from nearby communities.

“This is a special day in many ways,” Nickel said. “We have everyone here from toddlers to seniors, competitive international athletes to athletes with disabilities and developmental challenges, all cultures. The Sunset Rotary Club highlights the best we have to offer in San Bernardino.”

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Kaiser Permanente gives \$500,000 grant to new downtown San Bernardino health clinic

By Staff reports

Friday, June 24, 2016



FONTANA >> Kaiser Permanente awarded a \$500,000 grant to the help fund an ophthalmology department at the new Loma Linda University Health clinic in downtown San Bernardino.

The grant will help fund an ophthalmology department by paying for six exam rooms for adult and pediatric patients as well as a state-of-the-art testing procedure room for training of future ophthalmologists, Kaiser Permanente said in a statement.

Included in the equipment is an Optical Coherence Tomography machine, which is a non-invasive imaging technique for viewing the

retina, Kaiser officials said.

“Improving the health of the communities we serve has always been a central part of Kaiser Permanente’s mission,” Greg Christian, senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser Permanente San Bernardino County Area, said in a statement.

“We are thrilled to be able to support SACHS (SAC Health System) as they open their new facility in San Bernardino and move forward to provide their clients with ophthalmology services,” he said.

“Difficulty receiving specialty care such as ophthalmological services has created a situation where the uninsured and underinsured can only access a doctor when a chronic condition has reached alarming levels,” Dr. Timothy Jenkins, area medical director and chief of staff, Kaiser Permanente San Bernardino County Area, said in a statement.

“The resources we are investing into this new clinic will help improve the lives of people in San Bernardino County and support the critical services provided by our community partner SAC Health System,” Jenkins said.

SAC Health System is an affiliate of Loma Linda University Health, which is the developer of the downtown campus.

A formal ribbon cutting for the \$65 million Loma Linda University Health San Bernardino campus, at 250 South G Street, was held Wednesday.

The facility will begin offering services for family medicine, pediatrics, and behavioral health next month, with additional services to be added later.

It also includes the San Manuel Gateway College, located in the building, which will offer education for health-field jobs such as medical assistant and certified nurse assistant.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Marijuana industry increasingly hot career path

The pot industry, once fringe, is increasingly a hot career path despite lingering stigma

By Brooke Edwards Staggs, The Orange County Register

and David Downey, The Press-Enterprise

Saturday, June 25, 2016



Some wear their hair in messy buns and have sleeve tattoos. Some have salon cuts and \$2,000 suits.

Some are joining blue-collar unions, getting health benefits as they grow and sell a plant they've long loved. Some say they never touch it, but they're standing guard outside shops and fiercely lobbying legislators in Sacramento to ensure that others can.

As public support and legalization of cannabis spreads, those who have quietly worked in California's medical marijuana industry are slowly emerging from the shadows. And professionals who never

would have considered joining the industry a couple of years ago are leaving behind traditional careers in law, real estate and finance as they flock to what they see as the next big boom.

"The fastest-growing industry in America is marijuana, period," said Jake Bhattacharya, who recently quit his information technology job to open a cannabis testing lab in Upland.

With medical marijuana legal in 25 states and recreational use allowed in four, pot outsold Girl Scout cookies in 2015, according to a report from Marijuana Business Daily, a 5-year-old news website covering the industry.

Pot retail sales are expected to hit \$4 billion this year, and Marijuana Business Daily is projecting that number could nearly triple by 2020.

The actual size of the industry may already be much larger, too, as California hasn't tracked its massive medical marijuana market in the 20 years since it's been legal. And it could skyrocket if voters here and in a handful of other states approve recreational use Nov. 8.

The lack of reliable data coupled with the "niche" aspect of the industry is why cannabis isn't included in mainstream economic and jobs reports, according to Christopher Thornberg, director of the Center for Economic Forecasting and Development at UC Riverside.

"It's still too fly-by-night," Thornberg said.

California's Employment Development Department doesn't track the diverse daisy chain of cannabis jobs. And several recruitment firms said they don't deal with the industry.

Job seekers and employers instead turn to Craigslist or specialized sites. A recent post on WeedHire.com was for a \$75,000-a-year account manager at GFarmaLabs, which makes marijuana products in Anaheim, and one on 420careers.com for growers and trimmers at Buds & Roses dispensary in Los Angeles.

Working in the industry isn't without complications.

It remains illegal at the federal level, which limits access to financial services and causes lingering concerns over raids by federal authorities.

California's market is emerging from two decades of nearly nonexistent regulation and intense battles with local governments who were less than welcoming to "potpreneurs." That legacy means newly licensed shops often still rely on growers and manufacturers in the gray market, and they struggle to survive alongside unlicensed operators who aren't paying the same hefty taxes.

Then there's the glaring disapproval that comes from shrinking (per the polls) but vocal pockets of the public. Fear of backlash from conservative family members or future business associates kept several cannabis workers from speaking on the record for this report.

"Let's face it. Of course there is a stigma," said Juliet Murphy, a career coach who runs Juliet Murphy Career Development in Tustin.

Murphy expects it would raise eyebrows for more traditional employers to see a weed industry job on someone's resume. However, she sees it as less of an issue as the industry becomes more mainstream and as millennials transform the workforce.

"There are still a lot of kinks that are being worked out. But I think this presents an opportunity for a lot of jobs, provided that people do it right," Murphy said. "I think in the next five to 10 years, it's going to be huge."

Eddie Funxta, a geneticist/breeder who lives in Banning, said the growth boom around the corner could be particularly huge for Inland Southern California. He said the industry has the potential to create good jobs in a two-county region that has lower incomes and has recovered more slowly from recession than coastal communities.

Funxta suggested it could even refresh San Bernardino's not-so-flattering image.

"The county already has a reputation for murder," he said. "Why not have a reputation as savior?"

Funxta has been working to develop useful strains of cannabis for years. He speaks passionately about its potential to ease the pain and discomfort of people suffering from cancer, AIDS and other debilitating ailments.

"It's our God-given right as human beings on this planet to be compassionate towards other people," he said.

Here are stories from a diverse group of locals willing to speak publicly — some for the first time — about what it's like to work in Southern California's legal marijuana industry.

Equipment supplier

Meet Andrew Yoon, a 24-year-old Corona man who moved to the area from St. Louis a few years ago.

"I grew up going to church," Yoon said. "I thought weed was so bad until I was 18, 19."

Then he tried marijuana recreationally, and persuaded his mother to use it medicinally to aid her successful battle against ovarian cancer.

"It helped her with the nausea, with sleeping," Yoon said.

A believer in marijuana's usefulness as a medicinal tool and convinced the industry has a bright future, Yoon started up an extraction-equipment supply business in January.

“It looks like a lab,” Yoon said, in an interview Friday at his Xtractor Depot shop in San Bernardino.

There are chemistry-like glass tubes and spinning machines, and rows of stainless steel solvent tanks.

Yoon said some customers purchase complete systems for extracting active ingredients of cannabis, which are made into liquid tinctures, lotions, salves and edibles.

“Some people just need parts,” he said. “They’ll come in here and buy just one metal fitting.”

He started with a two-person staff. Five months later, he operates with five employees recruited from the circle of friends he met in college. Since January, he said, Xtractor Depot has netted \$1 million in sales.

Yoon, a clean-shaven man who still looks like a college kid, is making plans to expand. He intends to open a large distribution warehouse in Los Angeles and convert the San Bernardino “lab” into a “teaching facility” for people wanting to see how the extraction process works.

Yoon had no qualms about venturing into the business despite its stigma.

“I saw that it was booming, that it was growing,” he said.

Lab technician

Before he opened a testing lab in Upland, Jake Bhattacharya didn’t notice the lack of labels on marijuana products he consumed.

Today, the 28-year-old preaches the importance of measuring how “fragrant terpenes” (pungent, oily compounds secreted by the plant) affect the “analgesic power” (pain-relieving benefits) of cannabis.

“People want this information,” said Bhattacharya, a long-haired Bernie Sanders supporter who occasionally does stand-up comedy. “That’s what makes it a legitimate, normalized drug — when it’s tested.”

A technology buff, Bhattacharya was making a good living working on computers and copy machines.

But he wasn’t happy or making the money he needed to buy the house on the hill he’s sought since his parents emigrated from Bangladesh.

So six months ago, he launched Flower Potency Labs.

Calibrating his \$8,000 gas chromatography testing machine isn’t much different from calibrating copy machines, he said. To bridge the gap, he took a course offered by the machine manufacturer on preparing samples.

“There are a lot of procedures that go into testing,” he said. “But once you know them like the back of your hand, you can knock out some very accurate tests in a short amount of time.”

His lab is a pink-walled room in his home, and he’s still pursuing what’s now a voluntary accreditation. So he’s fighting to compete with more sophisticated labs by offering slightly faster, cheaper potency tests.

He tells suppliers that labeling their wares with test results will boost their professionalism and justify charging a premium for potent products, the same way brewers charge more for high-alcohol ales.

Still, he said it’s tough persuading them to fork over \$65 for tests that won’t be required until 2018, under state regulations recently signed into law.

Bhattacharya hopes to grow Flower Potency Labs to be ready for that boom. “I want to be a real player in the

industry,” he said.

Geneticist/breeder

Eddie Funxta attended San Bernardino’s San Geronio High School in the ’90s and he voted for the first time in November 1996. That was the election when Californians passed Proposition 215, opening the door for pot to be smoked or ingested by suffering people.

Now 37, Funxta has been working for almost two decades to develop useful strains of cannabis that effectively ease patients’ suffering.

After high school, he began breeding from a base in Hollywood. More recently, he operated in Colorado and Washington, responding to the demand created when those states greenlighted recreational use. Three months ago, he returned to Inland Southern California to continue his genetic engineering career.

Much of what Funxta does is trial and error.

“We don’t know the plant’s personality until we smoke it,” said the Banning man who sports black slicked-back hair, long sideburns and a salt-and-pepper beard.

If the quality of a particular strain turns out to be subpar, Funxta starts over.

“I can’t give that to my patients who are very sick,” he said.

His job description is more specialized than others in the burgeoning industry. “It’s kind of a special niche,” he said.

At the same time, Funxta said there is a demand for breeders because of the wide variety of cannabis strains, and climates and soil conditions in which they are grown.

“We need breeders in every region,” he said.

And as the industry expands, he said, there will be a need for many growers.

Funxta derives much satisfaction from his work.

Holding up a bottle of tincture and lifting out an eyedropper filled with a brown liquid, Funxta said, “I’ve had people taking bags of pills throw them away with this bottle.”

CONSIDERING A CAREER IN CANNABIS?

Here’s some advice from Julie LaCroix, a career counselor based in Newport Beach, and Juliet Murphy, an executive career coach in Tustin.

Educate yourself on the legislation and regulations that impact the industry and stay up to date on changes.

Join a professional association such as the National Cannabis Industry Association or Women Grow.

Treat it as a legitimate industry. For managers, that might mean using traditional employment sites to recruit. For workers, that means being professional.

Don’t get in it for the money. As with any job, there has to be a passion there, either for medical marijuana itself or for the particular career you’re pursuing in the industry.

Focus on developing skills and relationships and providing value to your employer rather than simply knowing the product and market. These will transfer if the volatile industry flips or if you decide to move away from

marijuana down the road.

Be aware of how working in the industry might impact your status in the larger workforce. If status is something you value, that might be problematic due to the stigma that still exists over the marijuana industry.

On the other hand, don't let fear of that stigma stop you if you're passionate about this industry. Many other industries – from alcohol to mortgage banks – also carry some stigmas. But people manage to move in and out of these industries every day.

Realize that industry experience is a bonus, but bringing the right skill set is more important. So even if you've never worked in marijuana, your experience as an account manager or security guard can apply.

WHAT DOES THE STATE SAY ABOUT TESTING POT?

Under state laws passed in October, all cannabis sold in California will have to first be tested at a licensed lab starting Jan. 1, 2018.

State officials are still working out details of how that testing will work. But the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act generally requires marijuana to be tested for potency, pesticides, mold and other contaminants.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160625/marijuana-industry-increasingly-hot-career-path>

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By [Rene Ray De La Cruz](#)[Print Page](#)

June 26, 2016 12:01AM

Marijuana-themed festivals get pushback from city leaders

VICTORVILLE — The increase in marijuana-themed festivals coming to the High Desert Event Center hasn't gone unnoticed by city officials, who have vigorously opposed them to state officials.

The three-day Chalice California Music, Glass, Hash and Art Festival is scheduled for the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds in July, but Victorville officials have taken a stand against the event dubbed the “Biggest Hash Festival in America.”

“The Chalice California Festival is not endorsed by the Victorville City Council,” said city spokeswoman Sue Jones, who told the Daily Press the Council unanimously opposes this event and any event that promotes the use of recreational drugs.

Jones said Mayor Gloria Garcia recently sent the 28th Agricultural Association Board a letter detailing the Council's unanimous opposition to the Chalice California festival, urging the board to cancel it at the state-operated site.

“Our greatest concern is the safety of our citizens, and for this reason, we have been in communication with our police force regarding the Chalice event,” Jones said. “They have assured us that they are prepared to enforce all applicable laws during the festival.”

Chalice will feature a lengthy musical lineup, which includes the popular hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan and rapper Machine Gun Kelly. The event also includes live demonstrations of glass, paint and artists, as well as the use of medical marijuana in designated areas.

Several promoters and a member of the High Desert Cannabis Association said many cannabis promoters chose the Victorville fairgrounds or National Orange Show in San Bernardino because most large venues in Southern California have banned marijuana-themed events.

Because the local fairgrounds has welcomed so many cannabis events, many promoters think the Victorville site is “cannabis-friendly,” said HDCA member Kasha Herrington.

People on both sides of the cannabis issue told the Daily Press not all promoters, venues and cannabis-themed events are equal, with some having strict rules and some having a no-holds-barred attitude.

Event promoters and representatives from the High Desert Cannabis Association, who advocate for medical-marijuana use with accountability and various restrictions, told the Daily Press some people in the cannabis industry will give the movement a bad name and undo much of what they're advocating.

John Mendoza, the founder and promoter of the Abra Ca Dabs Festival, told the paper he brought his two-day event to the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds in March. Visitors listened to live bands, enjoyed food and drink, looked at art, visited vendors and entered the “CA Prop 215 medicating area,” with a valid doctor's recommendation.

“There are some promoters who do it just for the money,” said Mendoza, who started the festival nearly 10 years ago after he began taking medical cannabis because of injuries he sustained in a motorcycle accident. “We started the yearly festival in a bar with 300 people and it's grown to 5,500.”

Mendoza, 37, said he keeps the Abra Ca Dabs events “under the radar” so only those who have a passion for responsible medical marijuana know about them.

“Most marijuana use has changed over the years and has become more like a wine or beer tasting event,” Mendoza said. “There are different strains, tastes and potencies, and people like to gather to consume legally and to talk.”

Mendoza said he's had little to no problems after promoting dozens of “low-key” events across Southern California. He added that his big concern comes from unscrupulous promoters and vendors in the industry who will “tarnish the reputations” of those abiding by a strict code of “legal conduct.”

“Cannabis use gets blamed for everything, instead of people looking at the promoter or venue host,” Mendoza said. “We need an educated community and promoters with integrity who won't burden the taxpayers or police by being reckless and irresponsible. Public safety is number one.”

Captain Sam Lucia of the Victorville Sheriff's Station said his department will plan for the impact, and staff additional personnel and resources on event days, adding that the upcoming Chalice festival includes a lot of additional staff and resources.

“Although the SBC Fair plans their own events and makes their own business decisions, they generally include the Police/Sheriff in pre-event meetings,” Lucia said. “Based on those meetings, SBC Fair CEO Geoff Hinds relies heavily on Police/Sheriff recommendations regarding the number of additional staff to make an event safe.”

Hinds said the fairgrounds is a state-owned public assembly venue, with event contracts approved by the fair board. He added that all events must be properly vetted and pass a certain litmus test that includes legalities, safety, financial prudence and the benefits to the community.



Vendors look over their display of glass bongs at the first day of Hempfest in Seattle in 2013. The High Desert Event Center in Victorville is starting to attract several marijuana-themed music festivals, even though city officials oppose them. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

"It's not our job to determine morality, but to adhere to our vetting process," Hind said. "Events may not meet our personal moral standards, nor is it something we can force."

Lucia said the station has a "great working relationship" with Hinds regarding these matters, adding the event promoter foots the bill for the additional staffing costs, which they are required to pre-pay.

"Whether the Sheriff's Department agrees or disagrees with the type of events hosted by the fair, we still have an obligation to police our city and will continue to do so," Lucia said.

Herrington said her group is working with the fairgrounds to help guide them as they work with various promoters and vendors. She also remarked that the group polices events undercover to ensure that laws are not being broken.

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<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160626/NEWS/160629806>

Print Page

Miniature golf tournament for local youngsters held by San Bernardino County Public Attorneys

Posted: Thursday, June 23, 2016 9:25 am

Ten youngsters from the Fontana Boys and Girls recently enjoyed an afternoon at Scandia Ontario compliments of the San Bernardino County Public Attorneys Association (SBCPAA).

The SCBPAA hosted a miniature golf tournament for underprivileged youth throughout San Bernardino County as a way to give back to more than 100 local children.

"The San Bernardino County Public Attorneys Association is excited about hosting this miniature golf tournament with these underserved youngsters," said Deputy District Attorney Michael Abacherli, president of SBCPAA.

The youth do not regularly have the chance to experience many of the activities for children that are available in San Bernardino County.

"This is an opportunity for these children to have a good time for free. But, we also get to show them a fun game with which they may have no familiarity," said Abacherli. "Plus, we can serve as role models for them regarding the benefits of continued education, professional employment, and the financial wherewithal to afford little pleasures like a round of miniature golf."

SBCPAA worked with the San Bernardino County supervisors and the City of Ontario to select local children's charitable groups to be the beneficiaries of this event. Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman joined the festivities at Scandia and placed golf tournament medals around the necks of the youngsters at the end of the event.

To add to the festivities, the children were treated to the opportunity to talk with members of the Ontario Police and Fire Departments and to view their vehicles up close. The participating youth also received lunch and an unlimited pass to Scandia's other fun-filled activities for the remainder of the day.

In addition to the sponsorship by SBCPAA members, the day's events were also sponsored by Mastagni, Holstedt, APC (Attorneys Professional Corporation).

The miniature golf tournament is a precursor to the Sept. 23 SBCPAA Gives Back Golf Tournament at Shandin Hills Golf Course in San Bernardino. The tournament is SBCPAA's annual fundraiser to benefit Option House, Inc., a nonprofit shelter for victims of domestic violence in San Bernardino. The adult tournament fee is \$150 per golfer or \$500 per foursome; sponsorships are available. For more information,



Miniature golf

Members of the Boys and Girls Club in Fontana had a special opportunity to play miniature golf at Scandia.

call Tammy Higgins at (909) 331-8194 or Maureen O'Connell at (951) 288-3294.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Paper trail shows in Beaumont probe questionable spending

Former officials facing trial on corruption tied to housing project still not built, feds investigating

By David Danelski, The Press-Enterprise

Saturday, June 25, 2016



BEAUMONT >> The fax message sent to a Los Angeles bank demanding more than \$135,000 from Beaumont city bond funds had a sense of urgency.

It came from Urban Logic Consultants, a private company under contract with the small Riverside County town that provided administrators for city engineering, planning and economic development services.

It demanded that the bank “expedite the processing and deliver the check to Mr. Alan Kapanicas,” the city manager.

And the money was to pay property tax bills for the Heartland partnership, a Seattle-based landowner that was planning to build 1,224 homes on 420 acres at the west end of town — just days before the developer faced late fees.

Some 16 years later, the housing project still hasn’t been built, the feds are investigating how bond funds were spent, and former officials are awaiting trial on felony corruption charges.

The vast construction site just north of Highway 60 appears to have been graded long ago. But nature is taking it back, with shrubs and flowering annuals now rooted along deep ruts carved into the beige-colored earth by years of erosion.

The property tax expense illustrates what some citizens and city officials see as questionable uses of bond funds that occurred during the roughly two decades of Beaumont city administration under Kapanicas and the Urban Logic owners, Enest Egger, David Dillon, and Deepak Moorjani, who served, respectively, as the city’s planning, economic development and public works directors.

Bond funds are supposed to go for public works projects. But in Beaumont they appeared to have been tapped repeatedly for operational or noncapital expenses, city records show.

Kapanicas, Egger, Dillon, and Moorjani are now awaiting trial on felony corruption charges that include embezzling bond funds by approving payments to their own companies.

A recent city-commissioned report found that since 1994 Urban Logic received at least \$47 million in bond funds — for what their invoices described as engineering and project management services.

Meanwhile, between 1995 and 2011, General Government Management Services, a company created by Kapanicas and his wife, Diana, received \$1.2 million, mostly for financial services related to preparing bonds to go to market and for managing the funds.

Attorneys for Dillon and Moorjani say all payments to Urban Logic were lawful and done with approvals from

the City Council and other officials.

But other bond expenses are raising more questions as thousands of Beaumont residents remain on the hook for more than \$200 million in bond debts they are paying off through special taxes known as Mello-Roos assessments.

Federal rules generally require that municipal bond funds be used for public works projects, such as streets, sewers, water works, parks and sidewalks, said Rick Teichert, a former treasurer for Moreno Valley, who also served as the top finance officer for the Orange County Transportation Authority and the Sacramento Public Library Authority.

Yet city records show that bond funds were used for what appear to be more general uses.

Such funds were used, for example, to buy laptop computers, including a \$3,387 Dell Inspiron model that Dillon ordered from the manufacturer in Texas and had shipped to his office in Temecula, the records show.

The other bond expenditures included \$66,863 for what city documents describe as a “lawn mower and trailer.”

And there was a \$3,625 bill from a Capistrano Beach economics firm for preparing a PowerPoint representation used in 2008 by then-Mayor Brian DeForge for the State of the City address.

The presentation trumpeted the city’s successes, such as attracting big box retailers, like Best Buy and Bed, Bath and Beyond. One slide bragged of the city operating with “fiscal discipline.”

But getting complete accounting of how city bonds were spent remains elusive.

A city-commissioned report by the Orange-based Urban Futures consulting firm on bond spending made public this month found that \$53.1 million in bond funds were transferred to other city accounts.

While city construction projects were paid for with this money, it remains unclear how much of it was used for public works, said Michael Busch, CEO of Urban Futures, in a June 7 presentation to City Council.

Many of the city’s requests for bond funds have vague descriptions of why the money is needed. Many city invoices for bond funds are simply for “administrative services.” And city and state audits show capital funds were repeatedly borrowed to cover city operational fund deficits.

What’s more clear is that bond funds were often used to cover expenses that developers normally pay for, according to the records.

These included the Seattle development firm’s property taxes, the costs of city building fees, and regional fees for transportation projects and habitat conservation. At least two bond withdrawals were to cover developer attorney bills — one for \$35,000 and another for \$67,345 — that had been initially sent to homebuilders.

Using bond funds to pay for regional transportation fees alone saved developers nearly \$9,000 per house, making Beaumont a cheaper place to build. And developers made Beaumont the choice for thousands of new tract homes. Since the early 1990s, the town’s population nearly quadrupled to more than 40,000.

The issue of how bond money was spent is important because the interest on municipal bonds paid to investors is tax-exempt, allowing cities to pay lower interest rates. These lower financing costs give local government entities a break when building public facilities.

Beaumont’s bond spending is now under scrutiny.

City officials have disclosed that U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the agency that enforces laws governing the nation’s stock and bond markets, subpoenaed city records in April and initiated a formal investigation.

Beaumont City Councilman Lloyd White said he was not surprised that bond funds were spent on laptops, PowerPoints and property taxes.

“You’re finding the same kind of things we are finding in our own investigations, and we are trying to be transparent,” White said.

“My reaction is just more frustration,” added Beaumont Mayor Mike Lara. “It is just a lack of control. We don’t have a clear picture what went on. But we have a lot of questions.”

Moorjani had signed the approval for bond withdrawals to pay for developer property taxes and attorney fees, as well as a laptop computer sent to the Urban Logic offices, city records show.

He could not be reached directly, but his Los Angeles-based attorney, Mark Werksman, declined to address questions about why Moorjani signed the bond spending requisitions, saying questions would arise again in court.

But Werksman said in an email that Moorjani has done nothing wrong.

“All his work was done openly and for the benefit of the city or in fulfillment of the city’s contractual obligations, and was approved by the City Council and other responsible city officials. His actions were lawful and appropriate, and he vigorously denies any wrongdoing.”

But using bond funds to pay a developer’s property taxes showed a public-financing program gone astray.

The development site, called the Heartland, is in a larger Community Facilities District the city created in 1993 to issue bonds to pay for streets, sidewalks, sewers and other public projects. And property owners agreed to make debt payments through special taxes until houses were built and sold.

But in 1999, bond funds were used to pay the special taxes needed to cover payments due on the very same bonds.

The housing development, first approved in 1994, has languished. The partnership managed by the Seattle-based Heartland Group sold the land in 2002 to Pacific Century Homes amid hopes it would finally get off the ground. But that company filed for bankruptcy in 2008.

The land is now owned by a partnership managed by Lehman Brothers Holdings in New York City.

Both the Riverside County District Attorney and the California state controller have criticized how the bond funds were handled. Bond funds were held in a bank account in Los Angeles and could be withdrawn under the approvals of Kapanicas and the Urban Logic officials, bypassing city coffers.

This meant the thousands of bond expenditures lacked scrutiny from the City Council and the public, prosecutors alleged in court papers. Dillon’s attorney, Paul Grech, counters that the City Council was in the loop.

Beaumont resident and city watchdog Judy Bingham said property tax payments and many other bond expenses needed daylight.

“They had such control over everything in this town, and they were free to do what they pleased,” Bingham said. “And they never brought anything like this to the City Council.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160625/paper-trail-shows-in-beaumont-probe-questionable-spending>

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ENVIRONMENT: Inland air quality once again 'unhealthy' in places, 'very unhealthy' in others

By [ANNE MILLERBERND](#)

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The air over Inland Southern California is expected to reach "very unhealthy" levels Monday following a weekend of high temperatures.

A map from the Air Quality Management District shows that air directly north of San Bernardino will be classified as "very unhealthy" Monday, meaning everyone should try to avoid exerting themselves while outdoors and stay inside if possible.

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The amount of ozone in the atmosphere will still put the air in parts of Riverside and San Bernardino counties at "unhealthy" levels, the district says. That classification means everyone exposed to the air could notice health effects.

Cities with unhealthy air will include Riverside, Chino, Moreno Valley and Perris, the district's map shows.

The main difference between "unhealthy" and "very unhealthy" air is the number of people who will notice health effects and the severity of those effects.

The unusually poor air quality is likely the result of the high temperatures in the area which cause urban pollutants to heat up.

It's not unusual for air in Southern California to be of "moderate" quality, which according to the AQMD means "there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution."

Our neighbors to the northeast in parts of central California will also experience "unhealthy" air on Monday, the AQMD says.

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